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HOMER's HYMN TO VENUS;

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK,

WITH

NOTES,

By I. RITTSON.

Ταύτην δ' ἐξ ἀρχῆς τιμὴν ἔχει, ἠδὲ λέλογχε
Μοῖραν ἐν ἀνθρώποισι καὶ ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι
Παρθενίης τ' ὀάρους, μειδήματά τ', ἐξαπάτας τε,
Τέρψιν τε γλυκερὴν, φιλότητά τε, μειλιχίην τε,

Ἡσιόδου Θεογονια.

The Horſe had ſcamper'd long, and ranged,
Wild as the mountain-blaſt:
But ſport grew old, and times had changed:
They drove him home at laſt.
Ty'd in the mill, a ſullen drudge,
He paces round and round:
Yet, though ten thouſand miles he trudge,
Is where he ſtarted found.

ADDRESS TO TRANSLATORS.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, NO. 72, ST. PAUL'S-CHURCH-YARD.

M,DCC,LXXXVIII.

HYMN

TO

VENUS.

TO me, cæleſtial Muſe! the works unfold
Of Cyprian Venus, clad in robes of gold;
Whoſe ſoft delights ætherial boſoms know,
And mortal men confeſs on earth below;
Whoſe laws the monſters of the briny deep,
The woodland brutes, and feather'd nations, keep;
Unbounded Potentate!—her ample reign
Fills ev'ry land, and ſtretches o'er the main.

Three pow'rs alone deſpiſe her melting art;—
Jove's blue-ey'd daughter guards her dauntleſs heart:
Her breaſt no ſoft deluſive thoughts invade,
For ſterner cares employ the martial maid;
She taught the artiſt firſt to ſhape for war
The burniſh'd target, and the rattling car;
She taught the virgin too, in youthful bloom,
To form the ſhining labours of the loom.

Nor can the ſmiling Queen of Pleaſure move,
Reſounding Dian with the ſweets of love;
Pleas'd on the hills her rapid ſhafts to ſpeed,
From bow unerring, at their ſavage breed;
Pleas'd with the dance, the loud harmonious lyre,
And the ſhrill orgies of her virgin choir:
To her the greenwood's glimm'ring ſhades are dear,
To her the ſtate where righteous men appear.

By Veſta too no roſy chains are worn;
By awful Veſta, Saturn's eldeſt-born;

Yet

Yet laſt was ſhe, when in his counſels fail'd
The gloomy king, and mighty Jove prevail'd.
Her Phœbus woo'd, and he who rules the main;
Yet vain their ſuit, and all their wiſhes vain:
Touching the Thund'rer's head, an oath ſhe took;
(Time hath not chang'd it, nor have ages ſhook;)
That, uneſpous'd, ſhe wou'd for ever claim
A virgin's honours, and a virgin's name.
To her, in lieu of marriage, Jove conſign'd
Immortal honours of the nobleſt kind:
Thenceforth amidſt the ſplendid dome her ſeat;
Her's the rich viands and the luſcious meat;
By all, who dwell on ample earth, rever'd,
Her praiſe in each reſounding fane is heard.

With theſe from Venus not one rapture reigns,
Nor pours one burning wiſh along their veins:
None elſe on earth, or on th' Olympic heights,
Can boaſt exemption from her ſoft delights:

Nay he, at times, who rules the world above,
Hath left his grandeur for the ſweets of love:
Sapient and great! th' illuſive pow'r inflames
Ev'n dreadful Jove with love of mortal dames:
Yet huſh his wooings, nor to Juno known,
His ſiſter, wife, and partner of his throne;
Whom Rhea bore to Saturn's ſtrong embrace,
Firſt of the Goddeſſes in regal grace;
And Jove, who rules the blaſt of thunder, led,
Majeſtic ſpouſe! to ſhare his golden bed.
On Venus too at laſt his pow'r impreſs'd
The ſame deſires, and pain'd her heav'nly breaſt;
That, unexpert no more, herſelf might know
In mortal loves what ardent pleaſures glow;
Nor boaſt again how ſhe in women's arms
Had lock'd the gods with unreſiſted charms;
Or how the female pow'rs forſook the ſtars,
With darling men to wage her gentle wars:

And hence what demi-gods deriv'd their birth,
What Heroes flouriſh'd on the face of earth:
'Twas for this cauſe the monarch of the ſkies
Made anxious throbbings in her boſom riſe.
Form'd like a God, on Ide's exalted head,
His lowing herds divine Anchiſes fed;
She ſaw, and eager wiſhes ſwell'd her heart,
Such as the keeneſt joys and woes impart.
To Paphos firſt, her Cyprian dome, ſhe came,
Where altars ſmoke in honour of her name:
She clos'd the doors, and with obſequious mien
Th' attending Graces waſh'd their ſmiling Queen:
Anointed ſtraight with ſnowy hands, and ſhed
Cæleſtial unguents on her beauteous head:
Her od'rous mantle next, inwove with gold,
Ambroſial wav'd in many a glitt'ring fold.
In all her robes, and girt with magic tone,
Bright as the day enchanting Venus ſhone;

Then through the clouds purſu'd her airy courſe,
To fountful Ide, the woodland monſter's nurſe:
Where mighty lions fawn'd and play'd around,
As tow'rds the ſtalls ſhe walk'd the lofty ground;
Boars too, and wolves, in kindly ſport appear,
And pards, remorſeleſs hunters of the deer:
The Queen of pleaſure, gladd'ning at the ſight,
Fill'd each fierce boſom with a ſoft delight;
Sunk in the brakes by pairs her joys they prov'd,
Whilſt Venus journey'd to the man ſhe lov'd:
Him like a God within his tent ſhe found,
Touching the lyre to many a thrilling ſound;—
On ev'ry ſtring the voice of muſic rung,
In lofty notes, reponſive as he ſung;
For all his comrades with the herds had gone,
And left the hero to his ſong alone:
When like a virgin, and in ſweet diſguiſe,
Jove's beauteous daughter ſtood before his eyes;

Of

Of her full ſplendour cautious, veil'd a part,
Leſt awe ſhould damp, or terror chill, his heart:
Yet not unmov'd the noble herdſman gaz'd;
Her grandeur ſtruck him, and her robes amaz'd:
Veſtments more bright than is the living flame,
And rings, and ſcarfs, adorn'd her lovely frame;
The glitt'ring brooches lent their aid to deck,
With chains of wreathed gold, her ſnowy neck;
And, pendant thence her ſwelling breaſt adown,
Their various texture glitter'd like the moon.
That wond'rous ſight whilſt view'd the godlike man,
Love ſeiz'd his boſom, and he thus began.—

Whatever of the bleſſed is thy name,
Who hither com'ſt, oh hail imperial Dame!
Whether Latona, or the huntreſs-maid,
Or Venus in her robes of gold array'd,
Whether I ſee the blue-ey'd virgin's face;
Or art thou Themis? or ſome beauteous grace,

To whom immortal life and joys are giv'n,
The ſweet companions of the pow'rs in heav'n?
Or if thou art ſome nymph to groves allied;
Or Oread fair, who dwell'ſt on lofty Ide;
To whom it's dells and graſſy ſweeps are dear,
Fountains and rivers, tumbling ſwift and clear;
Upon the moſt conſpicuous of theſe heights
I'll build thine altar and perform thy rites;
But thou, propitious, give me to enjoy
A name diſtinguiſh'd, 'midſt the ſons of Troy;
My blooming offspring grant me to ſurvey;
Live happy long, and view the light of day;
Paſs on a wealthy man, till age appears,
And reach his portal through a length of years.

Thou, moſt renown'd of all the ſons of earth!
Fair Venus ſaid, I boaſt no heav'nly birth:
No goddeſs I: why ſhouldſt thou me compare
To thoſe who trace the lucid fields of air?

Of woman born, and mortal ſire, I came,
Otreus my father, not unknown to fame;
Perchance of Otreus thou haſt heard, who reigns
Supreme in Phrygia's fortified domains.
Our diff'rent ſpeech to me alike is known;
A Trojan nurſe hath made them both my own;
Who from my mother's arms, when weak and young,
Receiv'd and taught to ſpeak her native tongue.
But now hath he, by whom was Argus ſlain,
Snatch'd from reſounding Dian's feſtive train;
As 'midſt unnumber'd multitudes we play'd,
Full many a damſel, and betrothed maid;
Thence the wing'd God, who bears the golden wand,
Hath bore me fleet o'er towns, and cultur'd land;
O'er gloomy waſtes, unbuilt, unſhar'd by men,
Where the lone ſavage couches in his den:
Nor ſeem'd my feet to touch the plains below,
But light in air, and with the winds to go:

Call'd, as he ſaid, a deſtin'd wife, to ſhare
Anchiſes' bed, a gallant race to bear.
So much the God diſclos'd; then ſped amain
On rapid pinions to the ſtarry plain.
Hither I came impell'd by urgent fate;
But by th' almighty Thund'rer ſupplicate;
By thoſe from whom thou art, thy noble line
(For ſure no baſe inglorious parents thine)
Me yet a virgin, unexpert of love,
Let thy ſire view, and mother chaſte approve;
Thy brothers too, whom the ſame care hath bred,
And equal pains to blooming manhood led:
Nor will I prove, as daughter or as ſpouſe,
Beneath the glories of their name and houſe:
But whether deem'd, a match, in form and face
Or held unworthy of their ſplendid race;
To Phrygia let ſome meſſenger repair,
To ſooth a father's and a mother's care;

Their

Their ſhining gifts thou quickly ſhalt behold,
The loom's rich labours, and the maſſy gold:
Next let the Hymenæal ſong ariſe,
Rever'd by men and grateful to the ſkies.
She ſaid, and wak'd her raptures in his breaſt:
Fierce was his love, and forceful words expreſs'd.

Since thy deſcent is from the ſons of earth;
Otreus thy ſire, and woman gave thee birth:
Since Hermes brought thee here, a deſtin'd wife;
Mine ſhalt thou be, the partner of my life;
And none of mortal or immortal race
Shall now detain me from thy ſoft embrace;
Though the far-ſhooting God, enrag'd, ſhou'd throw
The vengeful ſhaft from his unerring bow,
Yet, Goddeſs-like! to ſhare thy genial bed,
I brave the gates of hell, and join the dead.

He ſpoke, and ſeiz'd her hand: the beauteous dame,
Slowly behind, with eyes averted came:

Where for the king his lofty couch was ſpread,
With ſofteſt cloaths the bluſhing fair he led:
The ſkins of lions o'er the whole were laid,
And boars once dreadful in the woodland ſhade;
Whom, as they rang'd the hills in furly pride,
Himſelf had met with, and the monſters died,
Anchiſes firſt, e'er yet the couch they preſs,
Undid the fair adornings of her dreſs;
Remov'd her ſcarf, her buckles, necklace bright,
And brooches glitt'ring on th' aſtoniſh'd ſight;
Her wond'rous garment too, and magic zone,
He plac'd upon a ſilver-ſtudded throne:
Then (ſuch the will of Gods and fate's beheſt)
Unwitting, claſp'd a Goddeſs to his breaſt.
What time the keepers from their paſtures come,
And urge their lowing herds, and bleaters home,
She on Anchiſes ſhed the ſweets of reſt;
Herſelf reſum'd her ſplendors, and her veſt.

Then,

Then, clad in all her glories, near the bed
She ſtood, and ſilent rais'd her lovely head:
Such ſhone th' enchanting beauties of her face,
As thoſe of Venus deck'd by ev'ry Grace:
Next to awake the chief her voice aroſe,
And thus ſhe call'd him from his calm repoſe.

Ariſe, Dardanides! why doſt thou ſleep
Profoundly thus, and in a reſt ſo deep?
Ariſe and ſpeak: do I the ſame appear
As when thy view firſt caught me wand'ring here?

He heard awaking; but with wild ſurpriſe
Beheld her neck, beheld her ſparkling eyes:
With unknown terror ſeiz'd, and ſtrange diſmay,
Beheld, and ſhudd'ring turn'd his head away:
Beneath the cov'rings hid his graceful mien;
And, ſuppliant, thus addreſs'd the ſmiling Queen.

I knew thee, Goddeſs! when I firſt eſpy'd;
I knew thee, Goddeſs! but thy words deny'd.

Yet

Yet ah! I beg, by Ægis-bearing Jove,
Thy heav'nly breaſt let heav'nly pity move;
Nor doom me here an outcaſt to remain,
And drag a feeble wretched life in pain;
For he, whoſe arms infold an heav'nly pow'r,
Muſt fade, and wither in untimely hour.

To whom the daughter of great Jove began:
Oh thou, moſt famous of the race of man!
Let not one ſullen dread thy joys obſcure,
But live at eaſe and deem thyſelf ſecure;
Nor think that I, or ought in heav'n above,
Will harm a man, whom all th' Immortals love.
Thine is a ſon, who o'er high Troy ſhall reign,
And his ſon's ſons—a long and glorious train;
His name, Ænèas, ſhall denote the woes
Which pain'd his mother in a mortal's cauſe.

But of all fam'lies yours, in form and face,
Approacheth neareſt to th' immortal race:

Witneſs the boy, whoſe charms the Thund'rer led
To ſnatch on high—the yellow Ganymede;
To ſhare the banquets of the bright abodes,
And fill the goblets of carouſing Gods:
Such office his, in wond'rous ſtate, to hold,
And quaff the nectar from the ſculptur'd gold:
Imperial Tros continued griefs oppreſs'd,
And vaſt the woes of his paternal breaſt;
Hapleſs! he knew not, where the wond'rous blaſt
Had drove his ſon, or on what region caſt;
Till pitying Jove ſuch courſes fleet and ſtrong
Beſtow'd in lieu, as whirl the Gods along;
And bade the winged meſſenger unfold
His bliſsful ſtate, not deſtin'd to grow old:
The father griev'd no more; but urg'd with joy
His ſtormy ſteeds along the plains of Troy.
Tithonus too was from theſe mountains born,
Thy godlike kinſman, by the roſy Morn:

Who of the Thund'rer begg'd a ſuppliant wife
To crown her huſband with immortal life:
Jove, with aſſenting nod, Aurora heard:
Rapt'rous, had ſhe another wiſh prefer'd!
And aſk'd eternal beauty to beſtow,
Unfading bloom, and never-wrinkled brow!
So long as youth with vigour fill'd his veins,
He liv'd delighted in her orient plains:
Where on her golden throne, at earth's extreme,
She ſits in day-ſpring over Ocean's ſtream:
But when the marks of ſad decay appear'd,
When all of ſilver was his manly beard,
When the white hairs forſook his drooping head,
Divine Aurora left his frozen bed.
Yet anxious try'd to nurſe his lagging blood,
By coſtly robes, and with ambroſial food:
At laſt, when ſqualid eld o'er all prevail'd;
When in each limb thepow'rs of action fail'd;

She deem'd it beſt to place him in the bow'r,
Upon her couch, and ſhut the glitt'ring door:
No more his voice it's wonted ſound retains,
No ſtrength is left, no quick'ning ſenſe remains.
Upon ſuch terms I wou'd not wiſh to raiſe
Thee to the ſkies, nor give thee endleſs days.
Cou'dſt thou indeed retain this joyful prime,
A blooming huſband through the lengths of time;
No anxious care wou'd ſicken in my breaſt,
No grief wou'd haraſs, and no pain moleſt.
But, ah! too ſoon will age thy ſtrength deſtroy,
Unbid each bliſs, and tarniſh ev'ry joy;
Old age the pale! who human bliſs corrodes,
Weary and dull, and hateful ev'n to Gods:
The Gods from whom, for thee, I'm doom'd to bear
Eternal ſcoffs, and obloquy ſevere:
They dreaded once my potent charms to meet,
The gentle dalliance, and deluſion ſweet:

Which vanquiſh'd all, and cou'd each breaſt inflame,
With keeneſt paſſion, for an earthly dame:
No more ſhall they chagrin'd attend my boaſt;
Myſelf am injur'd, and my glory's loſt;
Since in my heart that veh'ment wiſh began,
Which leaves me ſad, and pregnant by a man.
But nymphs ſhall nurſe our offspring in their ſhades,
The mountain-nymphs, high-boſom'd Oreads:
Obſequious they to Gods and mortals dwell
On ſacred Ide, and range each ſloping dell;
Amidſt th' Immortals form a choral throng,
Feed on Ambroſia, and their lives are long:
Sileni oft with them, and Hermes, prove,
In darkling caves, the ſweet delights of love:
With them roſe pines, united in their birth,
And oaks congenial flouriſh on the earth;
Which high on hills, and on the mountains' brows,
Superior ſpread their ſympathetic boughs;

Groves

Groves of the Gods! whoſe hallow'd timbers feel,
Nor woodman's echoing ſtroke, nor biting ſteel:
But when their final deſtiny prevails;
When in each tree th' enliv'ning moiſture fails;
The bark is tainted round; the boughs decay;
Periſh the Nymphs and quit the light of day:
With theſe our lovely infant ſhall reſort,
Their hands ſhall feed him, and their care ſupport:
And when the firſt fair dawn of youth's begun,
Conduct to thee, and ſhew thy blooming ſon:
Ev'n five years thence (for I the whole explain),
Myſelf will come, and lead him back again:
Thou, when the gallant boy firſt greets thy ſight,
Shalt view his godlike features with delight;
And ſtraight convey, with all a father's joy,
To windy Ilium and exalted Troy.
But if, perchance, ſome mortal ſhou'd inquire
Who gave the ſmiling boy, who made thee ſire;

Say thou---The lovely wand'rers, who reſide
Amidſt the ſhades of foreſt-mantled Ide:
Relate that from a ſiſter-nymph he came,
And Calycopis was the mother's name.
For ſhou'dſt thou blab, and raſhly boaſt the charms,
Of Cytherèa reſting in thine arms,
Jove's ſmoky bolts ſhall blaſt thee in his ire---
(Beware; 'tis told thee) with their ſacred fire;
Look to the charge; and wrath cæleſtial dread.
She ſpoke, and to the realms of Æther fled.

Hail Cyprian Queen! to thee I wak'd the ſong:
Succeeding ſtrains to other themes belong.

THE foregoing tranſlation was not undertaken from an idle wiſh of rivalling the juſtly-celebrated Congreve, but from a deſire of rendering the Hymn to Venus more literally, and, as far as Engliſh idioms will allow, nearer to the ſtyle of the original Greek than had hitherto been done: it will naturally be infer'd from this, that the preſent tranſlator imagined ſuch a thing not to be altogether impracticable.

Enough has already been ſaid by various writers with reſpect to the authenticity of theſe Hymns, which are commonly aſcribed to Homer: that ſtyle and manner, that conſonance with the other parts of his works, and general mythology, which are to be found in them, are ſufficient, even though we ſhould throw aſide the teſtimony and authority of Thucydides, to perſuade us that no pedant, in thoſe ages which are called the *dark ones* of literature, brought them into the world.

Independent however of theſe conſiderations, it may not be altogether improper to ſubjoin a few annotations relative to the preceeding Hymn. The hiſtory, which even the ancient Greeks have given of their Gods, as well as terreſtrial and infernal divinities, is by no means uniform; and probably the diverſity of accounts, which are to be found in their relations, is to be attributed to that variety of opinions, prejudices, and habits of thinking, which are apt to take place in different countries: Homer and Heſiod, who have been by many accounted

cotemporaries,

cotemporaries, and who are univerſally allowed to have been nearly ſo, have not always given to the ſame deities the ſame characteriſtic marks: the Meonian Jove is not altogether the ſame as the Aſcræan; the deſcription, given of Briareus by one, does not correſpond with that of the other; nor does the catalogue of the ſea-nymphs, who, according to Homer, accompanied Thetis, reſemble much that which Heſiod has given of the Nereids: one of them has denominated the famous African river Ægypt, the other has called it Nile; and from hence ſome have deduced an argument, by which it was infer'd that Homer was the more ancient: Venus alſo, as we are told by him, was the offspring of Dione, whilſt the other informs us that ſhe was generated amidſt the ſoam of the ſea, and on that account had her Greek appellation: many indeed are the differences betwixt their reſpective divinities, which may be detected by cloſe obſervation and accurate compariſon; nor are they to be wondered at by any one who conſiders how ſtrangely the faſhions of religion have been ſubjected to mutation, and are at preſent diverſified, even in modern Europe: it is true that the prevalence of ſtubborn cuſtom, of particular ſituation, and of rigid authority, have produced (however paradoxical it may ſeem) more ſerious alterations, more ſects, and a greater tenacity with regard to opinions, than the lax and ſupple temper of Paganiſm was capable of—a ball or any projectile (if ſuch a ſimile may be allowed) is more affected in it's progreſs by ſtriking upon a wool-ſack, or any yielding ſubſtance, than when it meets with that, which, though of equal ſtrength and weight, immediately reſiſts its impulſe.

But, if ſome varieties are to be found in the works of theſe elder Greeks, we may naturally expect that far greater would be obſervable in the courſe of ſome hundreds of years, and at a time when they, by their conqueſts and emigrations, had ſpread themſelves at large over the contiguous regions; and, as hath always happened in ſuch circumſtances,

ſtances, the cuſtoms and preconceived notions of others became blended with, or at leaſt engraſted on, their own.

Thus, whoever pays attention to the mythology of the firſt Greek poets, and of thoſe who flouriſhed in the days of Ptolemy Philadelphus, will find that changes worthy of minute obſervation had been introduced: the Gods whom they worſhipped were only in name, and a few attributes ſimilar to the divinities of their anceſtors: the pomp alſo attendant upon, and the mode in which, religious inſtitutes were managed, or ceremonies exhibited, differed conſiderably from thoſe eſtabliſhments which in former times were accounted ſacred.

Nor are inſtances of this kind wanting in any part of the general tract of human intercourſe: the ſucceſſors of Alexander the Great, more eſpecially the Pompeys and the Seleucidæ ſoon, adopted the manners and ſenſuality of thoſe whom they governed: the Tartars forgot their original habits when they burſt into China, and became rulers of that mighty empire: the Vandals alſo loſt their martial character after they had ſettled in the fruitful northern ſhores of Africa; and it did not revive till enthuſiaſm and national enmity called it forth: the Spaniards likewiſe, when they had ſubdued the natives of Peru, grew, like them, triflers, indolent, and liſtleſs; although the luſt of gold, of glory, and of novelty, had made their forerunners active and valiant: nay, it is ſaid that Ruſſians, who have been baniſhed into Siberia, ſoon forgot what they had learned under the diſcipline of their imperial ſchoolmaſter, and relapſed into the barbariſms prevalent in their reſpective places of abode. Numberleſs are the ſtories which have been told of ſuch aſſimilations, not only in general manners, but looks, features, ſenſibility, intellectual powers, and activity; for thus, in ſpite of particular exertions, the voice of multitudes ſounds like that of reaſon and neceſſity: that ſtrict inquiſition which unbiaſſed curioſity wiſhes to eſtabliſh is ſuperſeded: imitation, the ſource of our knowledge as well as our miſ-

takes,

takes, predominates; and, however diſtinguiſhed, however excentric an individual may be, one general vortex hurries him along.

Although this preamble may ſeem unneceſſary, it will help to elucidate what immediately follows. The Venus, whom ancient poets have deſcribed, was quite a different perſonage from that which later authors have choſe to repreſent under the ſame title: amongſt the former ſhe was eſteemed a being capable of inſpiring love according to the *manner of a divinity*, and of ſpreading her influence by the ſame means as thoſe by which Apollo or the Muſes are ſaid to make poets, orators, and muſicians; Minerva artiſts; Ceres inſtruct ploughmen; or Mercury teach theſts, tricks, and loquacity; by a diffuſive power, to wit, extending itſelf in every direction, and concentered in the immediate divinity from whom it originated: there was no Cupid in thoſe days; no fretful boy furniſhed with a bow, quiver, arrows, and wings; or blind, as ſeveral have repreſented him, dealing forſooth (however eſtranged from probability ſuch a notion may be, and deviating from the general run of human ideas) his arrows inſtinctively.

Yet it muſt be confeſſed that mention is made of Love as a divinity independent of Venus, or that influence which ſhe poſſeſſed: but he is enumerated by Heſiod amongſt the eldeſt Gods; thoſe who ſprung immediately from Chaos, before Jupiter had ſupplanted his father, and even when Saturn himſelf had not acquired empire: he is repreſented as a companion of the Graces, and of Venus, but not as her ſon: he is alſo ſtyled the moſt beautiful of the Gods; the Being who diſſipates care both in immortal and mortal breaſts; who domineers over the wiſeſt deſigns, and is ſuperior to the efforts of prudence: in this office, however, if one may gueſs at the conceptions of the old poets, or the traditions which exiſted in their days, ſeems to have been ſuperſeded, or in a good meaſure forgot, upon the introduction of the later Gods, who came into power with Jupiter, or who ſprung from him;

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until this noviciate in buſineſs, this heterogeneous divinity, called Cupid, was fabricated in his ſtead: for indeed the maſter of love, whom the writers of antiquity have depicted, ſeems to have been ſomewhat liſtleſs in the exerciſe of his profeſſion, and in few reſpects ſimilar to him, whom modern Greek poet have dignified with the ſame epithet.

The peculiarities, notwithſtanding, and attributes of this whimſical ſon of an almoſt paſſive Goddeſs have been the favourite topics of many authors; and they have modified them according to their individual humours, or the prevalence of local opinions: his ideal exiſtence hath alſo furniſhed authors ſtill more recent with ſubjects from whence ballads, epigrams, puns, and witticiſms have been derived; from whence alſo have come the modes of expreſſions uſed, even of late years, in the ordinary colloquial and epiſtolary intercourſe of lovers. Some, alluding to immediate ſenſation, gave a torch to Hymen, and ſome to Cupid; with reſpect to ſcandalous and exceſſive deſires, they had found out the Pans and Priapi: others have mentioned Apollo and the Sun as ſynonymous terms.

We have no regular or authentic accounts of the time when the power of the Goddeſs devolved to her modern imaginary ſon; nor do we know at what period of ancient fable the mother almoſt entirely reſigned her influence, and gave to her rambling boy his humours and oddities; his equipage likewiſe, and ammunition; as if willing to acknowledge herſelf inadequate to the execution of that office, which was allotted to her in the diviſion of empire amongſt the Gods; or that her influence and power had become obſolete.

But that notion which the elder Greeks had of love, and of the influence of Venus, was quite different from this; it was more ſimple, more uniform, and therefore more analogous to the range of common imagination: it was conſidered as one general power, ſpreading itſelf by

unaccountable means amongſt all, of whatever deſcription, who inhabit heaven, earth, ſeas, or the nether regions, in the ſame manner as witchcraft or any other faſcination is ſuppoſed to operate: it was a ſomething which gave no one leiſure to be apprehenſive, aware, or ſuſpicious of its approach; and ſo gentle, ſo inſinuating, ſo ſubtle, that no one dreaded it.

Such an idea was exceedingly remote from the tenor of thoſe ſyſtems, which try to infuſe a notion of a divinity eternally in a ſtate of childhood, yet ſtrong enough to bend a bow, the force of which was ſufficient to tranſpierce any thing; blind, yet the firſt of archers; often wounding his mother, yet ſtill continuing her darling, and the ſupporter of her power; the brother of Heroes and of mighty men, yet himſelf a dwarf; and, as one would at firſt ſight imagine, in no reſpects akin to them; furniſhed alſo with wings, though as a divinity he has no occaſion for them. In fact, the poets of later times ſeem, in perſonifying each attribute and characteriſtic of love, to have made up ſuch a motley being, as we can ſcarcely imagine by any ſtretch of fancy to have ever exiſted; they have analyſed the general form, yet knew not how to recompound it.

Theſe inconſiſtencies however have been the favourite topics of ſeveral authors; the diverſity of whoſe fancies, or preconceptions, ſeems to have rendered the God whom they deſcribed as verſatile a being as their own phantaſtic deſcriptions and whimſical alluſions choſe to make him: they gave a ſort of character to each particular feeling, and conſequently faſhioned according to their reſpective conceptions that which is known by the name of love, or Cupid.

It may be indeed ſafely concluded, that before the days of Anacreon ſuch fancies had prevailed: but that maſter of the feſtive ſong, who did not make love a dreary melancholic habit, and who could addreſs a graſshopper in the moſt enchanting language; whom many have

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try'd to imitate, and yet have almoſt uniformly try'd in vain; and who could tell a delightful tale to a ſparrow; led away the imagination by a power almoſt reſiſtleſs, yet almoſt inſenſible: his nightly adventure, his race, and his battle with Cupid, compel even the moſt churliſh to be pleaſed: and, whatever lays a ſtrong hold upon the fancy, will be remembered on a future day.

Theocritus in the next place, and the other Sicilian poets, have given celebrity to this ſpurious being: Moſchus and Bion have furniſhed us with ſtories, which have been tranſlated into ſeveral languages; and the Latin poets, in forming the characters of their divinities, ſeem to have been more powerfully influenced by thoſe opinions which prevailed amongſt their Greek neighbours of Italy and Sicily than by thoſe of their more diſtant maſters, who inhabited Greece itſelf, and the leſſer Aſia; for vicinity of ſituation, with the conſequent facility of intercourſe, is apt to introduce in every corner of the world a ſimilarity both of thought and of the modes of action; and hence thoſe things which ſeemed diſtinct, and varying from each other gradually aſſume a reſemblance; or perhaps become intermixed, in ſuch a manner, that they can hardly be diſcriminated. Yet, it is ſtill to be remembered that, even in the ſame country, opinions alter, as it were, of themſelves: that Athens which encountered Darius and Xerxes was quite different in philoſophy, traditional rites, public devotion and oratory, from that which Philip of Macedon, his ſon, or the beſieger of Rhodes found; that very Athens again underwent material changes before the Auguſtan age, and ſtill greater ones before it was ſubjected to the Goths. There is no occaſion to be afraid in applying this to other ſtates and empires.

And it was probably from the cauſes, which have been already enumerated, that the Gods of the Romans were a ſort of compound, partly taken from the firſt wild inhabitants of Italy and partly from the Greek coloniſts. Their Venus, in conſequence of this mixture, bore

a conſiderable reſemblance to the wanton divinity of the later Greeks: ſuch, at leaſt, is ſhe whom Virgil, copying or occaſionally tranſlating the works of Theocritus, hath repreſented; and ſhe who hath furniſhed Ovid with ſo many ſmart ſtories. All theſe accounts, heterodox as they are, with reſpect to the notions of the primary Greeks, have been tranſmitted to us, and are ſtill prevalent amongſt us; they have arrived at our days principally through the medium of Latin poetry; and Anacreontics, though in general poor imitations of the beautiful original ſongs, are to be heard almoſt every where; beſides each ſchool-boy is accuſtomed to read the paſtorals, ſtories, odes, and elegies, which are extant in the Roman language, and not unfrequently to imagine that the ancients had no diverſity of doctrine or opinion.

Line. 17. Nor can the ſmiling Queen of Pleaſure move.

THE word Φιλομμειδὴς, to which part of this line refers, has generally been tranſlated "Laughter-loving;" and not altogether improperly, as the phraſe is very well adapted to the character of the Goddeſs; beſides the Greek word itſelf, with reſpect to the number and arrangement of its letters, pretty much reſembled ſuch an one as might poſſibly expreſs what that compound epithet indicated. It is here rendered in a ſimilar manner; yet, in reality, it never had ſuch a meaning (See Heſiod's Theogony, *l.* 200.)

From the frequent uſe of this expreſſion in the old poets, it may be preſumed that it was more familiar once, and leſs offenſive, than ſuch an one would be at this day; for "Tempora mutantur" and "Nos mutamur," &c. Therefore, though ſome tranſlators may not, as is exceedingly probable from various circumſtances, have underſtood its real and original meaning, it is well enough that, either through chance or deſign, they have accommodated their phraſes to modern nicety.

L. 18. Reſounding Dian.

It hath been ſaid by ſome, that this Goddeſs hath three names, and a triple office; being at once powerful in heaven, earth, and hell. It is certain, however, that Σελήνη (the Moon), Ἄρτεμις (Diana), and Ἑκάτη (Hecatè), are quite diſtinct from each other, according to the old poets, both in their particular functions and the relative times of their birth: nor is Phoebe in any reſpect the moon, but the grandmother of Diana. (See again Heſiod's theogony, *l.* 136, 404—*l.* 371—and *l.* 411.)

L. 28. The gloomy King.

The original phraſe, Κρονος αγκυλομητις, or Saturn the *crooked Counſellor*, hath either come down to our days, or been kept alive by a ſimilarity of ſenſation or conception: for it is not uncommon in many countries to call a peeviſh,

peeviſh, crabbed perſon, who forms ill-natured ſchemes, *crooked.* The general explanation ſeems to be this: from infirmities, or from years, many have the ordinary ſhape of the body altered or diſtorted; being accuſtomed to indulgence, or ſubjected frequently, to pain or painful reflections, they render the word *crooked* ſynonymous to *ill-natured*

L. 238. And his ſon's ſons.

It will not be eaſy to find any thing in Homer's works which can induce us to believe that Æneas fled from the ruins of Troy into Italy, and was founder of the Roman empire; or even that ſuch a tradition exiſted in his days: yet, what is directly contrary to ſuch an opinion may be found, not only in this place, but in the Iliad: Livy and Virgil cannot therefore, with reſpect to their narrations, have his authority as a ſanction for what they have related. It is ſtrange (as Sir Walter Raleigh obſerved) that ſo many people, like Geoffrey of Monmouth, ſhould be ambitious of deriving their origin from the Trojans, a vanquiſhed nation.

L. 270. Ocean's ſtream. παῤ Ὠκεανοῖο ῥοῆς.

We have formed quite a different idea of Ocean from that which the ancients ſeem to have had of it; for we generally apply it to the main ſea: whereas, in all probability, either the Dardanelles, the ſtraits of Gibraltar, or at leaſt ſome narrow ſea, or the tract of a current paſſing from one ſea into another, is meant by it.